

Lakecaster Publications
The Passion Of The Woman Angler

by Patty Schaefer/LakeCaster

12/09/2001 **Passion.** A word that conjures up all sorts of thoughts, feelings, memories - but what is it, really? Rapture, ecstasy, love, commitment, enthusiasm, dedication are all words with similar meaning. If you embody all of these things you could come up with a host of people that it describes. For this time, we're talking about women. To narrow the field a little more, you could think of people like Ann Thomason Wilson or Kathy Majors or Nobie Jo Lebert and many more. In the fishing industry, these world class pro's are the hero's to many women, one of which is Debra Hengst of San Antonio, Texas.

I met Debra Hengst in New Orleans, Louisiana, during the B.A.S.S. World Classic this past August as she was working the Stren fishing line booth in the trade show. Her excitement and fervor for this game of fishing really caught me as her raw honest innocence and unrivaled passion to do her best in this rugged field of Bass Tournament competition, and being around her you can't help but feel her excitement and rugged energy as it exudes from her vibrant personality.

Being both a bass tournament angler and a tournament reporter, it was easy for me to understand Debra's motivation and tenacity for this wonderful outdoor sport. We spoke several times via phone and email between the Classic and her next tournament on Lake Sam Rayburn, Texas, which was the Skeeter Boats Jamboree.

What motivates a woman like Debra? How did all this get started for her? "I first started bass fishing with my brother in 1986, Debra began to feed my hungry note-book. "My brother was fishing a club tournament on Lake Corpus Christi, so he invited me to go along with him. "I've always had a love for fishing and hunting, Debra advised, "as I was brought up that way, but I really didn't get into bass fishing until 1988 when I met my tournament fishing mentor, Tommy Jenkins. I started fishing with him in the team tournaments in 1991, which were the B.A.S.T. (Bass Association of South Texas) and Honey-Hole, where we excelled as a solid fishing team. "In 1993, Debra informed, "we won the B.A.S.T. Championship where we won a boat. "It's because of Tommy Jenkins that I'm here today, Debra misted from happy but sad memories, "because of the love and passion he instilled within me for this sport, I'm continuing on and hope to excel in this great sport of bass tournament fishing."

"Okay, so once the spark of love for fishing is ignited, what course of action do you take?"



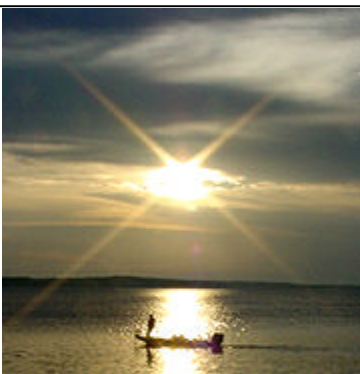


Team/Skeeter Pro, Debra Hengst, running her High-Performance Skeeter Bass Boat
photos by Ed Snyder & Patty Schaefer/Lakecaster

"In 1995 I became a club member of the South Texas Bass N'Gals. I fished more Bass N'Gal events in 1995 where I was one of four picked to compete in the National Bass-N'Gals affiliated bass club tournament of Champions on Lake Fork, Texas. I fished my first National tournament on Lake Sam Rayburn as a rookie and non-boater in 1996. In 1997 I came back to fish Lake Sam Rayburn as a boater where I caught an 8 pound bass, which gave me 2nd big bass of the tournament as well as a 26 pound "overall" weight that won me the 6th place award at that Bass N'Gal National Event. "I then went to the Missouri Invitational

on Lake of the Ozarks where I finished 12th place overall that put me in the 40th position for the Bass N'Gal National standings "Then Skeeter Bass Boat took me on in 1998 as a Team Skeeter member and I've been a Team Skeeter Pro/Angler ever since. "I've fished WBFA (Women's Bass Fishing Association) in 1998 and 1999 and the BASS Central division event in 2000 on the Red River in Shreveport, Louisiana, where I fished with several of the National BassMaster Pro's.

It can't be all smooth sailing out there on the water, Debra stated with a knowing grin, "man, or woman things just "happen" out there on the water. "There was the time when I was fishing with Tommy Jenkins over on Lake Falcon, Texas, while practicing for a tournament and fishing craw-worms near a tree. "He flipped to one side of the tree and I to the other, hitting at the same time, getting a bite at the same time, setting our hooks at the same time, and catching the same fish, a solid 5 pound bass. "We both fought over the ownership of that bass but ended up claiming it for both of us at the tournament weigh-in. "Another time, while we were fishing another tournament and while working some exposed brush piles, the back of the boat suddenly brushed up against some brush, and about a 3 pound bass "leaped" out of that brush-patch and into our boat right next to my foot. "I must have jumped three feet straight up out of my boat-seat as it scared the (BLEEP) out of me! We had to release that bass back into the water, as it was not a legally caught fish. And that fish would've made the difference for us winning that tournament event, but rules are rules--



"Out here on the lake, Debra states with a happy smile, "it's just me, the lake, and the sunsets
photos by Ed Snyder & Patty Schaefer/Lakecaster

While fishing Lake Corpus Christi in south Texas once, I happened to look down and thought I saw a black cord lying across my sneakered foot. But then, from out of that black cord "slithered" a forked tongue -"SNAKE"- I screamed as I leaped from the back of the boat and into the arms of my team partner, startled, He wanted to know what (BLEEP) happened, but all I could do was utter some un-vocaled (BLEEPS) in response as I pointed to where the snake was. "He just chuckled, walked over to it and lifted it up out of the

boat with his fishing rod and carefully released the snake back into the lake--"



A classic catch for a classic lady as Debra Hengst lands a good tournament bass
photos by Ed Snyder & Patty Schaefer/Lakecaster

Debra fished and competed at the Skeeter Jamboree, which is for team members only. Put on by the Skeeter factory every year for the Skeeter Team members, it is a draw tournament where the team members get a chance to fish with different Skeeter Pro/Team members each day where Debra drew BassMaster Super/Pro Jay Yelas of Tyler TX, for one of her days. Jay had just competed at the B.A.S.S. World Classic in New Orleans LA, and fishing with him was "quite an honor" Debra said,

"As I watch and learn from everyone I fish with, and fishing with the top pro's, such as Jay Yelas, just fuels my drive to be the best I can be in this industry."

"I have learned a great deal from my tournament and fishing experiences, Debra finalized for my notes, "to be independent, resourceful, and totally capable of handling anything in life that may come along. "I'm a much stronger person because of it and thoroughly enjoy life to the fullest as a direct result from it, and I highly recommend this lifestyle to any woman of passion who desires a strong and openly happy life in the great outdoors.

Debra Hengst is a professional fishing guide on Choke Canyon and Lake Falcon in south Texas. She is 100% black bass catch & release "ONLY" and is sponsored by: Skeeter Boats—Yamaha Outboards—Nautilus Batteries—Flowmaster Exhaust Systems—Motorsports Authority Xchange—Stren Fishing Line—Bag-Em Products—Strike King Lures—Tote Um Pole—Tex-All Boats—Kick'n Bass—

To expose yourself to the high energy levels of Debra's passion for the great outdoors, contact Deb's Guide Service—home (210)-492-0116- Cell-(210)-241-1959 or e-mail - fishnn59@hotmail.com

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